

Exploring the Multi-Dimensional Role of the United Nations in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of the United Nations (UN) in humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan. The UN has played a significant role in addressing the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people, particularly in the aftermath of the Taliban regime and during times of conflict. The paper provides an overview of the key humanitarian challenges faced by the Afghan people and the efforts of the UN to address them. It analyzes the effectiveness of the UN's humanitarian interventions, including its coordination with other international actors and local stakeholders. The paper also discusses the legal and ethical considerations surrounding humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan and the role of the UN in upholding human rights and promoting sustainable development. Overall, the paper argues that the UN has an important role to play in supporting humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan and that greater collaboration and coordination among stakeholders is essential for achieving lasting peace and stability in the country.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of UN humanitarian intervention on hunger in Afghanistan has been significant.¹ Afghanistan has been experiencing ongoing conflict and political instability for decades, which has led to widespread poverty, displacement, and food insecurity. The UN has been working to

address these challenges through various humanitarian interventions. One of the most significant interventions has been the provision of food assistance to those in need.² The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has been operating in Afghanistan since the 1960s and has been providing food assistance to millions of people affected by conflict, natural disasters, and economic shocks. In recent years, the WFP has expanded its operations to reach more vulnerable populations, particularly in areas affected by conflict. In

¹Security Council Emphasizes That Punitive Restrictions on Women's Rights, Escalating Hunger, Insecurity Taking Devastating Toll in Afghanistan | UN Press' <<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15222.doc.htm>> accessed 16 April 2023.

²'Deliver Humanitarian Aid | United Nations' <<https://www.un.org/en/our-work/deliver-humanitarian-aid>> accessed 16 April 2023.

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2020, the WFP provided food assistance to over 11 million people in Afghanistan, including those affected by conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the UN and its partners have been working to address the root causes of hunger in Afghanistan through long-term development programs. These programs aim to improve food security and nutrition by increasing agricultural productivity, supporting livelihoods, and improving access to water and sanitation. Despite these efforts, hunger remains a significant challenge in Afghanistan. The ongoing conflict and political instability continue to exacerbate the situation, and the COVID-19 pandemic has added further strain on the country's food systems.³ Therefore, while the UN's humanitarian intervention has had a significant impact on hunger in Afghanistan, more needs to be done to address the root causes of food insecurity and ensure sustainable solutions. The international community must continue to support the UN and its partners in their efforts to address the underlying challenges and provide assistance to those in need.

THE UNITED NATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

The United Nations (UN) has played a significant role in Afghanistan since 2001, when a U.S.-led coalition invaded the country to oust the Taliban regime. The UN has been involved in efforts to stabilize and rebuild the country, promote human rights, democracy, and development, and facilitate negotiations between the Afghan government and various insurgent groups.⁴ The UN has also supported the Afghan electoral process, including the presidential and parliamentary elections. It has provided technical assistance and advice to the Afghan Independent Election Commission and supported the participation of women in the political process.

The UN has also been involved in promoting humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, providing assistance to vulnerable populations affected by conflict, natural disasters, and other emergencies. The UN has worked closely with local and international partners to deliver aid to those in need and to ensure that assistance is provided in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of affected populations. The UN has also played a role in the peace process in Afghanistan, supporting the Afghan government's efforts

to negotiate with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. The UN has provided technical assistance and advice to the Afghan government and international partners to help facilitate peace talks and promote the implementation of any resulting agreements. Henceforth, the United Nations play a key role in the critical situation of Afghanistan:

PEACE AND SECURITY

The United Nations plays a critical role in maintaining peace and security worldwide through a variety of measures, particularly in Afghanistan.⁵ UN peacekeeping and observer missions are deployed to conflict zones to restore calm and allow countries to recover from conflict. UN mediation and support have brought many conflicts to an end, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, Sudan, and Nepal. UN peace missions address post-conflict situations and carry out peacebuilding measures. The UN also helps to clear landmines, teaches people how to stay out of harm's way, and supports victims of landmine accidents. The UN pursues global disarmament and arms limitation as central to peace and security. It works to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, destroy chemical weapons, and halt the proliferation of landmines, small arms, and light weapons. UN peacekeepers often work to implement disarmament agreements between warring parties.⁶

The UN is also involved in combating terrorism, preventing genocide, and combating sexual violence in conflict. The UN coordinates counter-terrorism efforts globally, and UN agencies and programs help countries to implement legal frameworks and promote international cooperation against terrorism. The UN has also put in place legal frameworks to combat genocide, and it seeks to prevent future acts of genocide through its Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme. The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide monitors dangerous situations and recommends action.

The UN's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict helps countries develop and implement laws that criminalize wartime rape and end impunity for perpetrators. The Special Representative also supports victims of sexual violence, provides training for law enforcement officials, and helps to develop specialized units of female police officers to investigate allegations of wartime rape.

The United Nations has played a significant role in promoting peace and security in Afghanistan for sev-

³‘70 Ways the UN Makes A Difference | United Nations Seventieth Anniversary’ <<https://www.un.org/un70/en/content/70ways/index.html>> accessed 16 April 2023.

⁴The United Nations in Afghanistan | United Nations in Afghanistan <<https://afghanistan.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>> accessed 16 April 2023.

⁵ibid.

⁶Suresh Kumar and Meha Pant, ‘Un Involvement In Afghanistan: POST-TALIBAN RECONSTRUCTION’ (2014) 18 World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues 116.

eral decades. In 1988, the UN helped broker a ceasefire between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, and in 1989, the UN helped to facilitate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Since then, the UN has been involved in various peace initiatives and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, particularly after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established in 2002 to provide political support and promote cooperation among the Afghan government, international partners, and civil society in building a stable and prosperous country. UNAMA's main focus is on promoting peace and reconciliation, supporting the rule of law and human rights, promoting good governance and sustainable development, and addressing humanitarian needs.

The UN has also played a role in facilitating peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban. In 2010, the UN established the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation to support Afghan-led efforts to bring peace and stability to the country. The UN has also supported the creation of the High Peace Council, which is responsible for negotiating with the Taliban and other armed opposition groups.

In addition, the UN has been actively involved in promoting security sector reform in Afghanistan. The UN has helped to train and equip Afghan security forces, including the police and army, and has supported efforts to improve governance and accountability in the security sector.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations (UN) has been dedicated to promoting human potential and improving living standards globally.⁷ The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have guided this work since 2000. UN agencies like the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Bank, and others have contributed to reducing poverty, promoting good governance, addressing crises, preserving the environment, and supporting development in various areas. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) focuses on alleviating rural poverty, and Africa has received a significant share of UN development assistance. UN Women works on achieving gender equality and empowering women in var-

ious aspects of life, including leadership, peace and security, economic empowerment, and national development planning. The UN has contributed to setting technical standards in various areas like statistics, trade law, customs procedures, intellectual property, aviation, shipping, and telecommunications.

The United Nations has played a significant role in supporting economic development in Afghanistan. The UN has been working in collaboration with the Afghan government and other international organizations to address key economic challenges and promote sustainable economic growth. Here are some examples of the UN's role in economic development in Afghanistan:

- **Promoting Private Sector Development:** The UN has been working to promote private sector development in Afghanistan, particularly by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and creating an enabling environment for business. The UN has provided technical assistance and capacity building support to SMEs, as well as training and mentoring for entrepreneurs. The UN has also supported the development of business incubators and investment funds to help support start-ups.
- **Improving Agricultural Productivity:** Agriculture is a major sector of the Afghan economy, and the UN has been working to improve agricultural productivity and enhance food security in the country. The UN has supported farmers by providing technical assistance and training in modern farming techniques, and by helping to build infrastructure such as irrigation systems and storage facilities. The UN has also promoted the use of high-yield seeds and improved livestock breeds to boost productivity.
- **Creating Jobs and Skills Development:** The UN has been working to create jobs and provide skills development opportunities for Afghan youth. The UN has supported vocational training programs and skills development initiatives to help young people acquire the skills they need to participate in the workforce. The UN has also worked to create jobs through infrastructure projects, such as road construction and renewable energy projects.
- **Strengthening Financial Systems:** The UN has worked to strengthen the financial systems in Afghanistan, particularly by promoting financial inclusion and access to credit. The UN has supported the development of microfinance institutions and mobile banking services, as well as regulatory reforms to improve the business environment.
- **Supporting Regional Economic Cooperation:** The UN has supported regional economic cooperation and integration in Afghanistan, particularly by working to

⁷‘What Can the UN Do for Afghanistan Now? | United Nations | Al Jazeera’ <<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/11/10/what-can-the-un-do-for-afghanistan-now>> accessed 16 April 2023.

improve trade and transport links with neighboring countries. The UN has supported the development of cross-border trade agreements and infrastructure projects, such as the construction of highways and railways.

The UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) promotes entrepreneurship, investment, technology transfer, and sustainable industrial development. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) leads global efforts to defeat hunger and improve agriculture, forestry, and fisheries practices. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank provide temporary financial assistance, training, and support for economic management and reform. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) sets standards and regulations for air travel safety, efficiency, and environmental sustainability.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations (UN) plays an important role in social development, including improving literacy and education, preserving historic and cultural sites, facilitating academic and cultural exchanges, addressing global problems, and taking the lead on global issues.⁸

Under the UN, UNESCO has helped 137 countries protect ancient monuments, cultural and natural sites through negotiating international conventions, such as the World Heritage Sites. Additionally, UNESCO has promoted academic and cultural exchanges, protected cultural heritage, and encouraged cultural expression, including for minorities and indigenous people.

The UN also has a think tank and postgraduate teaching organization, the United Nations University, with 13 research and training institutes and programs in 12 countries. This organization works with leading universities and research institutes to investigate issues such as sustainable development, development governance, and science, technology, innovation, and society.

The UN has played an essential role in promoting social development in Afghanistan. Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the UN has been working with the Afghan government and civil society to address social issues and promote human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion.⁹ Some of the key areas where the UN has been involved in social development in Afghanistan include:

- **Education:** The UN has been working with the Afghan government to improve access to education, particularly for girls and women. The UN has helped to rebuild schools and train teachers, as well as promote community-based education initiatives.
- **Health:** The UN has worked to improve access to healthcare in Afghanistan, particularly for women and children. The UN has supported the government in expanding healthcare services and improving the quality of care.
- **Women's empowerment:** The UN has been working to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Afghanistan. This includes supporting women's participation in political and economic life, as well as promoting women's rights and addressing gender-based violence.
- **Human rights:** The UN has worked to promote and protect human rights in Afghanistan, particularly the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups. This includes supporting the Afghan government in strengthening the rule of law and promoting accountability for human rights abuses.
- **Social protection:** The UN has worked to strengthen social protection systems in Afghanistan, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. This includes supporting the government in expanding social safety net programs and promoting access to basic services.

The UN has organized several conferences on global issues, such as the environment, human rights, population, and climate change, which brought together experts and policymakers from around the world, prompting sustained global action. The UN's efforts have contributed to raising the global adult female literacy rate and improving access to education for all children.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The United Nations plays a crucial role in the protection of human rights in Afghanistan. The UN Human Rights Council regularly reviews the human rights situation in Afghanistan and makes recommendations to the government and other actors to address human rights violations.¹⁰

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has a human rights mandate and works to promote and protect human rights in the country. UNAMA supports the Afghan government in implementing its

years-progress-women-and-girls-rights-erased> accessed 16 April 2023.

⁸UNESCO in Brief | UNESCO' <<https://www.unesco.org/en/brief>> accessed 16 April 2023.

⁹'Afghanistan: UN Experts Say 20 Years of Progress for Women and Girls' Rights Erased since Taliban Takeover' (OHCHR) <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/afghanistan-un-experts-say-20>> accessed 16 April 2023.

¹⁰'Human Rights Council Discusses Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, with a Focus on the Situation of Women and Girls' (OHCHR) <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/human-rights-council-discusses-situation-human-rights-afghanistan-focus>> accessed 16 April 2023.

human rights obligations, provides human rights training to government officials and civil society organizations, and monitors human rights violations.

The UN also supports the work of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), which is an independent national institution that promotes and protects human rights in Afghanistan. The AIHRC investigates human rights violations, provides legal aid to victims, and advocates for human rights reforms.¹¹

Additionally, the UN works to promote the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, including through the UN Women agency. UN Women supports efforts to increase women's participation in political and public life, promotes gender equality, and works to eliminate violence against women.

These are some of the ways in which the United Nations promotes and protects human rights, democracy, self-determination, and the well-being of vulnerable and marginalized groups:

- i. **Promoting Human Rights:** The UN has helped to enact dozens of legally binding agreements on human rights and has focused world attention on cases of torture, disappearance, arbitrary detention, and other violations through its human rights bodies.
- ii. **Fostering Democracy:** The UN promotes and strengthens democratic institutions and practices around the world, including by providing electoral assistance to more than 100 countries.
- iii. **Promoting Self-determination and Independence:** The UN played a role in bringing about the independence of more than 80 countries that are now sovereign nations.
- iv. **Ending Apartheid in South Africa:** The UN imposed measures ranging from an arms embargo to a convention against segregated sporting events, which contributed to the downfall of the apartheid system.
- v. **Promoting Women's Rights:** The UN has organized several World Conferences on Women and has promoted the rights of women worldwide through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- vi. **Combating violence against women:** UN-Women seeks to engage men and boys, works with local partners, and supports the adoption of laws against domestic and sexual violence. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women has awarded \$103 million to 393 initiatives in 136 countries and territories.
- vii. **Promoting Decent Work:** The International Labour Organization (ILO) has established standards and

fundamental principles and rights for work, including freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and the abolition of forced labor, child labor, and workplace discrimination.

- viii. **Promoting Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression:** UNESCO has helped to develop and strengthen the media and supported independent newspapers and broadcasters. UNESCO also serves as a watchdog for press freedom and publicly denounces serious violations.
- ix. **Promoting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** The UN promotes the participation of persons with disabilities in social, economic, and political life and has negotiated the first-ever treaty to advance their rights and dignity worldwide: the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- x. **Improving the Plight of Indigenous People:** The UN works to improve the situation of indigenous peoples all over the world in development, culture, human rights, the environment, education, and health through the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

ROLE OF THE UN IN ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

The United Nations is actively involved in addressing global environmental issues such as climate change, protecting the ozone layer, providing safe drinking water, tackling fish stock depletion, and banning toxic chemicals.¹² The UN is a forum for building consensus and negotiating agreements among its member countries to address these problems. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of leading climate scientists, has concluded that human activities are the primary cause of climate change. The UN is helping developing countries respond to the challenges of global climate change by funding projects that promote new technologies, energy efficiency, renewable energies, and sustainable transportation. The UN also monitors global fisheries production and works with countries to improve the management of fisheries, stamp out illegal fishing, and protect fragile species and environments. Additionally, the UN seeks to rid the world of some of the most dangerous chemicals ever created through the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

¹¹“Protect Human Rights | United Nations’ <<https://www.un.org/en/our-work/protect-human-rights>> accessed 16 April 2023.

These are some of the actions taken by the United Nations to address environmental issues:

- i. The United Nations is working to address climate change through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which assesses scientific findings, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which negotiates agreements to reduce emissions and help countries adapt to the effects of climate change.
- ii. The UN is helping developing countries respond to the challenges of climate change through the Global Environment Facility, which funds projects in areas such as new technologies, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation.
- iii. The UN is addressing global environmental problems such as ozone layer depletion, toxic waste, loss of forests and species, and air and water pollution through international forums for building consensus and negotiating agreements.
- iv. The UN Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization have been instrumental in highlighting the damage caused to Earth's ozone layer, and the Montreal Protocol has led countries to phase out chemicals that cause ozone depletion.
- v. The UN has worked to provide safe drinking water, with over a billion people gaining access to it during the first UN decade on water, and another 1.1 billion people gaining access by 2002. The second international water decade aims to reduce by half the number of people without a source of clean drinking water.
- vi. The UN is working to tackle fish stock depletion by monitoring global fisheries production and the status of wild fish stocks and working with countries to improve fisheries management, stamp out illegal fishing, promote responsible international fish trade, and protect fragile species and environments.
- viii. The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants targets hazardous pesticides and industrial chemicals that can harm human health and the environment and has been ratified by 179 countries. Other UN conventions and action plans aim to preserve biodiversity, protect endangered species, combat desertification, clean up seas, and curb cross-border movements of hazardous wastes.

The UN plays an important role in environmental protection in Afghanistan by supporting initiatives to promote sustainable development, protect natural resources, and mitigate the impact of climate change. Some of the key areas of focus include:

- **Promoting sustainable development:** The UN works with the Afghan government and local communities to promote sustainable development practices that protect the environment while promoting economic

growth. This includes supporting initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and the conservation of natural resources.

- **Protecting biodiversity:** The UN supports efforts to protect Afghanistan's rich biodiversity, including its wildlife, forests, and water resources. This includes working to establish protected areas, conserving endangered species, and promoting sustainable forestry practices.
- **Addressing climate change:** The UN works with the Afghan government and other stakeholders to address the impact of climate change on Afghanistan. This includes supporting efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote renewable energy, and strengthen the resilience of communities to the impacts of climate change.
- **Building disaster resilience:** The UN supports efforts to build the capacity of communities and government agencies to prepare for and respond to environmental disasters, including floods, landslides, and droughts. This includes providing technical assistance, training, and support for disaster risk reduction initiatives.

INTERNATIONAL LAW & THE UNITED NATIONS

International law is a set of rules, norms, and principles that govern the relationships between states, as well as their relations with individuals, non-state actors, and international organizations.¹³ The United Nations (UN) is a primary forum for the development and enforcement of international law. It was founded in 1945 with the purpose of promoting international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, and achieving international cooperation to solve economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems.

The UN has been instrumental in the development and codification of international law, as well as in the establishment of international courts and tribunals to enforce it. The International Court of Justice, for example, is the UN's principal judicial organ and has jurisdiction over disputes between states. The International Criminal Court is another important UN-backed institution that prosecutes individuals for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide.

The UN has also facilitated the negotiation and adoption of numerous multilateral treaties on a wide range of issues, including human rights, disarmament, the environment, and trade. These treaties are binding agreements

¹³‘International Law’ (LII / Legal Information Institute) <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/international_law> accessed 16 April 2023.

between states that define their rights and obligations under international law. In addition to its role in the development and enforcement of international law, the UN also plays a key role in resolving conflicts and promoting peace and security around the world. The UN Security Council, for example, has the authority to authorize military action and impose sanctions on states that pose a threat to international peace and security.

Providing Humanitarian Assistance

The United Nations provides humanitarian assistance to millions of people affected by conflicts, natural disasters, and other crises worldwide. UN agencies such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees work to deliver life-saving aid, such as food, shelter, clean water, and medical care, to those in need.¹⁴ The UN also coordinates emergency responses and helps to prevent and mitigate the impact of disasters by supporting disaster risk reduction efforts.

Protecting the Rights of Women and Girls

The UN works to promote gender equality and empower women and girls worldwide. It supports efforts to end violence against women and girls, increase their access to education and healthcare, and promote their participation in decision-making processes. The UN also works to advance women's economic empowerment, including through initiatives such as the UN Women's Empowerment Principles and the HeForShe campaign, which aims to engage men and boys in promoting gender equality.¹⁵

Combating HIV/AIDS and Other Diseases

The UN works to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases through a range of initiatives. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) works to prevent new infections, provide access to treatment and care, and address the social and economic

impacts of the epidemic. The World Health Organization leads efforts to prevent and control outbreaks of infectious diseases, promote vaccination and other preventive measures, and strengthen health systems to improve access to healthcare services.

Advancing Sustainable Development

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a blueprint for a more sustainable and equitable world. The 17 goals, which range from ending poverty and hunger to promoting clean energy and combating climate change, aim to create a better future for all people and the planet. The UN supports efforts to achieve the SDGs by providing technical assistance, mobilizing resources, and promoting partnerships between governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

International law plays a crucial role in Afghanistan in many ways. First, Afghanistan is a member of the United Nations and is bound by the international legal framework established by the UN. This includes various international treaties, conventions, and protocols on human rights, humanitarian law, and other issues that Afghanistan has ratified.¹⁶

Second, international law provides a basis for cooperation and support from the international community in Afghanistan's post-conflict reconstruction efforts. For example, the Bonn Agreement, a framework agreement signed in 2001 that established the Afghan Transitional Authority, provided the legal basis for the international community's engagement in Afghanistan's reconstruction.

Third, international law plays a critical role in protecting the rights of individuals in Afghanistan. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has jurisdiction over war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, and its investigations can help to bring perpetrators of such crimes to justice.

Fourth, international law is also important in addressing transnational issues such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and cross-border crime. The UN Security Council has passed several resolutions aimed at combating terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Afghanistan.

¹⁴“Providing Humanitarian Assistance | Humanitarian Assistance | U.S. Agency for International Development” <<https://www.usaid.gov/providing-humanitarian-assistance>> accessed 16 April 2023.

¹⁵“Protecting and Promoting the Rights and Leadership of Women and Girls Humanitarian Settings | Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325” <<https://wps.unwomen.org/protecting/>> accessed 16 April 2023.

¹⁶“The United Nations and International Humanitarian Law: The International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations’ Involvement in the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law - ICRC” <<https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/57jmuk.htm>> accessed 16 April 2023.

Finally, international law provides a framework for resolving disputes between states and ensuring the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Afghanistan has been involved in various disputes with neighboring countries over issues such as border disputes and water rights, and international law provides a basis for resolving these conflicts through peaceful means such as arbitration or mediation.

HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

Humanitarian affairs refers to the work of organizations and individuals who seek to improve the living conditions and protect the basic rights of people affected by conflicts, disasters, and other crises.¹⁷ This can include providing emergency assistance, such as food, shelter, and medical care, as well as longer-term development assistance to help people rebuild their lives and communities.

The United Nations plays a critical role in humanitarian affairs, coordinating the international response to emergencies and supporting the work of humanitarian organizations on the ground. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is responsible for leading and coordinating the global humanitarian response, working with governments, aid organizations, and other partners to ensure that aid reaches those who need it most.¹⁸ Other UN agencies involved in humanitarian affairs include the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is responsible for protecting and providing assistance to refugees and other displaced persons, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which works to ensure that children affected by crises have access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and clean water.¹⁹

In addition to the UN, there are many other humanitarian organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, that work to address the needs of vulnerable populations around the world. These organizations often work together in partnerships and coalitions to maximize their impact and ensure that assistance is provided in a coordinated and effective manner.

The UN plays a crucial role in providing assistance to refugees, including helping them to repatriate, integrate or resettle in third countries. The UNHCR has provided aid

to over 60 million refugees since 1951, and there are currently more than 42 million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons who are receiving aid from the UN.²⁰ Additionally, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides assistance, protection, and advocacy for some 5 million registered Palestinian refugees in the Middle East.

In addition to assisting refugees, the UN also helps victims of natural disasters and emergencies by coordinating and mobilising assistance through UN appeals. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) plays a vital role in predicting weather-related disasters and providing information on the dispersal of oil spills, chemical and nuclear leaks, and long-term droughts. The World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian agency, fighting hunger worldwide by delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. WFP assists around 80 million people in approximately 80 countries each year, and it increasingly uses cash-based transfers to provide aid. WFP also provides vital support for the whole humanitarian community in the fields of aviation, logistics, and telecommunications.

The United Nations plays a significant role in humanitarian affairs in Afghanistan, particularly in responding to the needs of people affected by conflict, natural disasters, and other emergencies.²¹ The UN coordinates and leads international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, protection, and support to vulnerable populations in Afghanistan.

The UN agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO), work closely with the Afghan government and humanitarian partners to provide humanitarian assistance in various sectors, such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), shelter, protection, and education.

The UN also plays a crucial role in advocating for the rights of Afghan people affected by humanitarian crises, including women, children, and refugees. The UN works to ensure that humanitarian assistance is delivered impartially, without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, gender, or political affiliation.²² Furthermore, the UN sup-

¹⁷'Humanitarian Aid' <https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid_en> accessed 16 April 2023.

¹⁸'United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and WHO' <<https://www.who.int/about/funding/contributors/ocha-and-who>> accessed 16 April 2023.

¹⁹'UNHCR - UN and International Institutions' <<https://www.unhcr.org/united-nation-and-international-institutions.html>> accessed 16 April 2023.

²⁰'Refugees | United Nations' <<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees>> accessed 16 April 2023.

²¹'Deliver Humanitarian Aid | United Nations' (n 2).

²²'Restrictions on Fundamental Human Rights, Especially for Women, Girls Exacerbating Bleak Humanitarian Plight in Afghanistan, Briefers Warn Security Council | UN Press' <<https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15009.doc.htm>> accessed 16 April 2023.

ports the Afghan government and other stakeholders in building the country's resilience to future humanitarian crises by strengthening disaster risk reduction and preparedness, improving early warning systems, and promoting sustainable development.

HEALTH AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations has taken various measures to promote reproductive and maternal health, responding to HIV/AIDS, eradicating diseases such as polio, smallpox, and tropical diseases, halting the spread of epidemics, pressing for universal immunization, reducing child mortality, and protecting consumers' health.²³ The UNFPA has helped individuals make informed choices on the number and spacing of their children through voluntary family planning programs, reducing unintended pregnancies and maternal death. The UNAIDS coordinates global action against HIV/AIDS by providing universal access to prevention and treatment services. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, spearheaded by WHO, UNICEF, Rotary International, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has eliminated polio-myelitis from all but three countries. The WHO-led program has reduced levels of river blindness in 10 West African countries, while eliminating the screw worm in North Africa. WHO also investigates and leads a global response to disease outbreaks such as SARS, Ebola, meningitis, yellow fever, cholera, and influenza. Efforts by WHO, UNICEF, and other organizations have increased global vaccination rates, saving more than 2 million lives every year. UN agencies have also undertaken various health and nutrition measures, including oral rehydration therapy, clear water and sanitation, and providing insecticide-treated nets and vitamin A supplements to reduce child mortality rates in developing countries. The FAO and WHO have established food standards, safety limits, and regulations to ensure the safety of food sold in the marketplace and to prevent consumer fraud.²⁴

Improving Global Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the United Nations specialized agency for health, providing leader-

ship in global health matters, setting norms and standards, and monitoring health trends. WHO works to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable, striving to ensure universal access to quality health services, to improve health outcomes, and to protect against health emergencies.²⁵

Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS is dedicated to ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Roll Back Malaria Partnership is a global framework for coordinated action against malaria, providing a forum for governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to work together to reduce the malaria burden. The Stop TB Partnership is a network of organizations and individuals working together to eliminate tuberculosis as a public health problem.

Supporting Women's Health

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) promotes the rights of every woman, man, and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA works to ensure universal access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, as well as maternal and newborn health care, and to advance gender equality.²⁶

Strengthening Mental Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes that mental health is an integral part of health and well-being. WHO works to promote mental health, prevent mental disorders, and provide care and treatment for people with mental illness. The United Nations has also designated October 10th as World Mental Health Day, raising awareness and promoting mental health education and advocacy.

²³Brian Greenwood, 'The Contribution of Vaccination to Global Health: Past, Present and Future' (2014) 369 *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 20130433.

²⁴'Home Fortification of Foods with Multiple Micronutrient Powders for Health and Nutrition in Children under Two Years of Age - PMC' <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7046492/>> accessed 16 April 2023.

²⁵'What Does the World Health Organization Do? | Council on Foreign Relations' <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-does-world-health-organization-do>> accessed 16 April 2023.

²⁶'UNFPA & the Sustainable Development Goals' <<https://www.unfpa.org/sdg>> accessed 16 April 2023.

Fostering Health Research and Innovation

The World Health Organization (WHO) supports health research and innovation as a means of improving health outcomes and achieving universal health coverage. WHO works to identify and prioritize research needs, promote ethical research practices, and facilitate the development and implementation of new health technologies.²⁷

Addressing the Global Tobacco Epidemic

The World Health Organization (WHO) leads the global effort to reduce tobacco use and its devastating health and economic consequences. WHO works to implement the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, a global treaty that sets out measures to reduce tobacco use, including taxation, regulation of advertising and sponsorship, and support for tobacco cessation.²⁸

Responding to Health Emergencies

The World Health Organization (WHO) plays a critical role in responding to health emergencies, including outbreaks of infectious diseases, natural disasters, and other humanitarian crises. WHO works with governments, partners, and communities to provide leadership and coordination, to mobilize resources and expertise, and to ensure that affected populations receive timely and effective health care.²⁹

The United Nations (UN) plays a critical role in promoting and supporting public health initiatives in Afghanistan. The World Health Organization (WHO), which is a specialized agency of the UN, is primarily responsible for addressing health-related issues in Afghanistan.³⁰ The WHO works closely with the Afghan Ministry of Public Health to strengthen the country's health system, including disease surveillance, outbreak response, and capacity building of health workers. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) also plays a significant role in promoting child health in Afghanistan. UNICEF supports

²⁷‘Research for Health’ <<https://www.who.int/our-work/science-division/research-for-health>> accessed 16 April 2023.

²⁸‘UNFPA Afghanistan | United Nations Population Fund’ <<https://www.unfpa.org/data/transparency-portal/unfpa-afghanistan>> accessed 16 April 2023.

²⁹‘UNFPA Strategic Plan | United Nations Population Fund’ <<https://www.unfpa.org/strategic-plan>> accessed 16 April 2023.

³⁰LAWRENCE O GOSTIN and REBECCA KATZ, ‘The International Health Regulations: The Governing Framework for Global Health Security’ (2016) 94 *The Milbank Quarterly* 264.

the Afghan government's efforts to improve maternal and child health by providing vaccines, nutrition, and health education services. Additionally, UNICEF works to prevent and respond to disease outbreaks, including polio, which remains a significant health threat in Afghanistan. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is another agency that supports health initiatives in Afghanistan.³¹ The UNFPA works to improve reproductive and maternal health outcomes, including increasing access to family planning services, reducing maternal mortality rates, and preventing gender-based violence.³²

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the role of the United Nations in humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan has been significant in addressing the complex and urgent humanitarian needs of the Afghan population. The UN has played a vital role in coordinating and mobilizing international humanitarian assistance, providing protection to vulnerable groups, and promoting respect for human rights. Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict and political instability, the UN has continued to work with national and international partners to ensure the delivery of life-saving aid and assistance to those in need. However, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains fragile, and the UN's efforts must be sustained and strengthened to address the long-term development needs of the country and ensure a lasting peace.

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³¹‘New US Funding Supports Reproductive Health and Protection Services in Afghanistan’ <<https://www.unfpa.org/updates/new-us-funding-supports-reproductive-health-and-protection-services-afghanistan>> accessed 16 April 2023.

³²‘UNFPA Strategic Plan | United Nations Population Fund’ (n 29).

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